



Country Coordination and Site Integration

VIETNAM ACTION PLAN



1. Background

Vietnam is one of the six countries in the CGIAR “site integration++” category, and the only one in Southeast Asia among the 20 focus countries for the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) Phase 2. Ten CGIAR Centers are currently engaged in collaborative activities with Vietnam, with 5 of them having local offices based in Hanoi. Of the proposed CRPs for Phase 2, 9 include Vietnam as target country.

Table 1 CGIAR presence in Vietnam

CGIAR Centers	CGIAR Research Programs – Phase 2
Bioversity International	A4NH
CIAT*	CCAFS
CIFOR*	Fish
CIP	FTA
IFPRI	RICE
ILRI*	Livestock
IRRI*	PIM
IWMI	RTB
World Agroforestry Center*	WLE
WorldFish	
<i>*with local office</i>	

The underlying purpose for developing the CGIAR Vietnam action plan is to enhance and facilitate collaboration among CRPs and with in-country stakeholders, and promote site integration of field-level activities, results and outcomes.

2. Stakeholders’ Consultation and Action Planning

CGIAR-Vietnam, comprising the participating Centers and Research Programs (Table 1), engaged in a four-step process of consultation and action planning with key in-country stakeholders.

- Intra-CGIAR orientation meeting (14 December 2015)* – All the Vietnam-active CRPs and Centers (except IFPRI) were represented at the meeting. There were 19 participants in a joint exercise for preliminary mapping of potential inter-CRP linkages and site-level integration.
- In-country stakeholders’ consultation workshop (15 December 2015)* – Over 70 representatives of existing and potential CGIAR partners participated. They represented five stakeholder categories -- research institutes and government agencies, universities, NGOs-private sector agencies and associations, international organizations and donors, and CGIAR staff. The main objective was to seek suggestions and feedback to the initial-stage proposed agendas and designs of CRPs for Phase 2.
- Bilateral meetings between CRPs/Centers and partners (January-February 2016)* – Following the discussions during the stakeholders’ consultations, CRPs and Centers organized parallel meetings with their respective partners. In these meetings, further inputs were generated in the conceptualization and planning of each CRP – with emphasis on their Vietnam-specific relevance to in-country stakeholders’ priorities.

- d. *Intra-CGIAR action planning meeting (7 March 2016)* – There were 15 participants representing Representatives of 10 CRPs and 6 Centers. Updates on the proposal preparation were shared for each CRP, and the CGIAR-Vietnam action plan was further discussed and elaborated upon.

As starting point, the action planning process identified existing and on-going mechanisms for country collaboration and site integration in Vietnam (Table 2). Center and CRP representatives confirmed that such mechanisms already exist, even as there are opportunities to turn them from largely informal into more institutional agreements. At the same time, the group agreed on those mechanisms that add value to the current arrangements and practices in Vietnam, rather than to aim for uniformity across “priority” countries in CRP Phase 2.

Table 2. Key examples of existing partnership and collaborative mechanisms for CGIAR Vietnam

Country collaboration and CGIAR coordination	Site integration
Monthly brown-bag CGIAR research seminar series	Information sharing on research activities and outputs in common sites
Informal consultation among management/administrative staff on practices for norms in engaging with in-country partners	Cross-visits by research teams
Staff sharing to address short-term/specialized needs of requesting Centers/CRPs	Joint inter-Center/CRP field missions in response to requests for technical assistance from government
Joint training/workshop events and/or participation in each other’s activities	Shared sites for projects within a CRP, and within a Center; a few cases of shared sites by CRPs
CGIAR Vietnam Facebook page	Facilitation of partnership building for common local-level partners
Office-space sharing	
Occasional joint dialogues with key government officials and donor representatives	

This report summarizes the agreed actions for CGIAR country coordination and site integration in Vietnam, and serves as a documentation of work-in-progress for continuous updating and refinement.

3. Establishing a sustained mechanism for collaboration amongst CGIAR entities

To promote greater collaboration and more efficient coordination among CRPs and Centers in Vietnam, three key organizational units will be formed and activated (Table 3):

- a. *Core Team* – To provide overall and regular coordinating function, comprising 5 members which are represented by heads of in-country offices for Centers with physical presence in Vietnam. CIAT serves as lead Center while ICRAF as co-lead Center.
- b. *Inter-CRP Working Group* – To participate in and contribute to joint planning and coordinated implementation of activities by CRPs. It comprises 10 members representing all CRPs operating in Vietnam for Phase 2. These include the 5 core-team members (each of whom already represents a CRP), plus 5 from additional CRPs needing representation.
- c. *CGIAR Vietnam Secretariat* – a team of 2-3 staffmembers from CIAT and ICRAF will provide the general communications, administrative and secretarial support to the core team and working group.

To operationalize the action plan, financial and other resources will be sourced from the following: a) “learning platform” component of individual CRPs as applicable, b) local offices of Centers and CRPs

subject to availability, 3) in-kind contribution from partners and other stakeholders in Vietnam. These financing arrangements will be in addition to the existing practices for cost-sharing and hosting by Centers and CRPs for activities that do not require major budgets (e.g. lunch for monthly seminar series, stafftime to manage FB account).

Table 3. Organizing for collaboration and coordination (provisional list).

Core Team	Inter-CRP working group	Secretariat
Dindo Campilan – chair Delia Catacutan (ICRAF/FTA-PIM) Leo Sebastian (IRRI/CCAFS-RICE) Nguyen Hung (ILRI/Livestock-A4NH) CIFOR – to confirm	<i>Core team members plus:</i> Stef De Haan (CIAT-RTB/A4NH) Nhuong Tran (WorldFish/FISH) Lucy Lapar (ILRI/Livestock) Bioversity Intl -to confirm IFPRI – to confirm	CIAT communications specialist, communications assistant ICRAF - to confirm

4. Ongoing dialogue and engagement with partners and stakeholders

During the stakeholders’ consultation workshop, an initial directory of existing and potential CRPs’ partners was developed. The Secretariat is tasked to regularly update and share this with CRPs and Centers in Vietnam, to support on-going networking and partnership building.

CGIAR Vietnam will organize an annual stakeholders’ coordination meeting to report on key accomplishments for the year and consult with them in planning for the next year’s workplan, to ensure better alignment with in-country needs and opportunities. A joint annual briefing with key government officials will also be undertaken, for which senior management staff of Centers and CRPs will be requested to join.

Meanwhile Vietnam’s agro-ecological regions will provide the overall framework for in-country dialogue and engagement for CRPs in Phase 2 (Figure 1). Officially, there are 8 agro-ecoregions. After mapping proposed Phase 2 activities of CRPs, stakeholders agreed to target 6 agro-ecoregions where there is greater commonality in target sites and local presence. North Central Highlands, South Central and Southeast are combined to form one eco-region.



Figure 1. Agro-ecological regions in Vietnam.

5. Collectively meeting the goals and targets of the SRF related to Vietnam

In targeting the six priority regions, CRPs will be guided by the CGIAR SLOs while responding to region-specific contexts and priorities. In-country stakeholders identified Vietnam-specific priorities as preliminary input to the action plan, as follows (Table 4):

Table 4. Research priorities, aligned with SLOs, for Vietnam's agro-ecoregions.

Region	SLO1-Reducing poverty	SLO2-Food, Nutrition & Health	SLO3- Natural Resources Management
Northwest	Soil erosion & coffee irrigation (WLE) Agroforestry (FTA) Indigenous pig value-chains (L&F) Cassava management and value chains (RTB)	Animal & plant pest surveillance (A4NH) Crop residues for feed (L&F) Tree domestication (FTA) Agro-climate information systems (CCAFS, GRISP)	Landscape environmental services (WLE) PFES/REDD+ (CCAFS, GRISP, FTA) Social forestry in swidden communities (FTA) Inclusive governance for NRM (PIM) Food nutrition inventory & improving dietary diversity through improvement of agricultural systems (A4NH)
Northeast	Cassava value chain development (PIM) Crop management (RTB) Smallholder crop production (RTB, PIM) Cold and drought-tolerant rice (GRISP)	Potato breeding & banana disease management (RTB) Climate smart agriculture (CCAFS)	Soil conservation and fertility (RTB) CSV, CSA, landscape mitigation modeling (CCAFS)

Region	SLO1-Reducing poverty	SLO2-Food, Nutrition & Health	SLO3- Natural Resources Management
<i>Red river delta</i>	Potato, cassava, fish breeding (RTB, L&F) Integrated fish farming & pig value chains (L&F) Salt tolerant rice varieties (CCAFS, GRISP)	Food safety, zoonosis, antibiotic resistance & aflatoxins (L&F) Agricultural waste recycling and health risks (L&F, A4NH)	ICT climate information services (CCAFS) Integrated fish farming systems (L&F)
<i>North-central-coast</i>	Cassava and sweet potato value chains and Root, Tubers, and Banana crops management (RTB)	Fish breeding & genetics, pig value chain upgrading, pig genetics (L&F) Food safety zoonosis, aflatoxins (A4NH)	Agro-climate information, CSV, CSA scaling (CCAFS) Mitigation modeling, landscape hydrological and carbon modeling (L&F, CCAFS, FTA) REDD+, social forestry in swidden communities, gender mainstreaming (FTA)
<i>Central Highlands, South Central Coast and Southeast</i>	Cassava management & value chain development (RTB) Pig value-chain development (L&F) Smallholder tree-crop production (FTA) Potato breeding (RTB)	Indigenous pig systems and genetics (L&F) Eco-efficiency and crop residues in livestock feed and nutrient cycling (L&F) Food safety (A4NH)	Landscape multi-functionality & Forestry, farm and settlement dynamics (FTA) Ground water management (WLE)
<i>Mekong river delta</i>	Rice-grain quality improvement and value chain (A4NH) Water control infrastructure & operation (WLE) Agricultural product quality & value chain & sustainable rice-farming (CCAFS)	Aflatoxin and pig diseases, integrated fisheries & aquaculture development, pest and disease management, fish and shrimp breeding (L&F) Climate-smart aquaculture (L&F, CCAFS) Improved rice varieties (A4NH) Fish foresight & modeling (A4NH, L&F)	ICT based information services; CSV; CSA including climate-smart varieties; Alternate Wet & Dry (AWD) irrigation; Greenhouse gas mitigation in rice (CCAFS) Farm & regional water management (salinity, acidity, sediment); water & nutrient management (WLE)

6. Aligning research activities and producing joint research outputs and public goods

To provide overall alignment of research activities by CRPs, a joint “impact pathways” planning workshop will be organized as a key launching activity for Phase 2. Two cross-cutting themes were identified as priority agenda for inter-CRP cross-learning and coordination – gender and indigenous peoples.

This overarching impact pathway for CGIAR Vietnam will provide the general framework for setting agenda, collaborative activities and partnership arrangements with in-country partners. This will also

provide a basis for individual CRPs to articulate how their respective program impact pathways build synergy with the overall framework.

The core team will meet quarterly, while the inter-CRP working team every six months, to facilitate regular monitoring and sharing of progress in implementation of activities. The secretariat will maintain an online-accessible platform (e.g. Sharepoint) to organize and share key reports and documents.

The communications staff of Centers and CRPs will develop an overall CGIAR communications strategy targeting in-country stakeholders. They will facilitate the generate of key knowledge products – from research working papers to policy briefs and use of social media – with emphasis on cross-CRP products and shared outputs. A key public-awareness raising tool will be a CGIAR Vietnam quarterly newsletter for external audiences – in both printed and online versions.

7. Making use of a common set of research sites

Considering the diverse agri-ecologies in Vietnam, site integration will be operationalized through regional-level planning and implementation.

For each agro-ecoregion, CGIAR Vietnam has assigned a lead Center and supporting CRP/s. They will be responsible for start-up planning by relevant CRPs and seek out participation of intra-regional stakeholders (Table 5).

In early 2016⁷ during the launch of CRP Phase 2, the assigned Centers and CRPs will be responsible for undertaking a similar stakeholders' consultation and joint planning in each of the target regions.

Table 5. Framework for site integration in Vietnam's key agro-ecoregions.

CRPs	Northwest	Northeast	Red River	North Central	Central-SEast	Mekong	National-level
Lead center & supporting CRPs	ICRAF FTA	CIAT/CCAFS	ILRI/A4HN	ICRAF/CCAFS -Livestock	CIAT/ RTB-Livestock	IRRI/Rice	CIAT
A4NH	X		X	X	X	X	X
CCAFS		X		X		X	X
Fish				X		X	X
FTA	X	X		X	X		X
Livestock	X		X	X	X		X
PIM		X	X			X	X
Rice						X	X
RTB	X	X	X	X	X		X

8. Sharing CGIAR facilities, staff and resources

CGIAR offices and staff are currently holding offices in 3 key locations around Hanoi:

- a) *Agricultural Genetics Institute (AGI)*: CIAT holds offices and an international laboratory in two floors of the Institute for its 40+-member team. It serves as RTB regional hub by already hosting CIP staff, while similar arrangement for CIRAD-RTB staff is under discussion. Next door is CCAFS Southeast Asia/IRRI office. AGI does not charge for office space as the Vietnam government offers this as counterpart support to the CGIAR ; only monthly bills for utilities are billed.
- b) *Leased office space in central Hanoi*: Besides serving as ICRAF country office, it also hosts 1 staffmember each from CIFOR and AVRDC. It currently has available space to sub-lease to any Center/CRP seeking to establish an office in Hanoi
- c) *Leased office space at the UN/FAO compound in Hanoi*: ILRI recently relocated its office within the same premises as key UN organizations.

An increase in office requirements for Centers and CRPs is expected in the coming years. CGIAR Vietnam will need to make a unified request to the Vietnam government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), to be allocated additional office facilities. It would be ideal to have all Centers in one location, but currently this is not yet feasible.

Since 2 years ago, Centers and CRPs have practiced staff-sharing especially to meet requirements for short-term and specialized areas. For both sides, the arrangement helps mitigate impact of long-term budgetary uncertainties by maximizing use of available staff and expertise within CGIAR Vietnam. As proposed action, the admin staff of Centers and CRPs will regularly coordinate staff requirements and availabilities.

9. Achieving greater delivery and scaling of CGIAR research and streamlining policy engagement

Throughout the stakeholders' consultation process, senior-level government officials stressed that the CGIAR must strike a balance between addressing its own SLO targets and the priority agendas of the country. A key entry point for engaging with the Vietnam government would be the National Agricultural and Rural Development Plan, along with other key policy frameworks in related sectors. It is therefore essential for CGIAR Vietnam to continuously keep itself up-to-date with new and changing policy pronouncements. This is most timely in 2016, as the Communist Party installs a new government, including leadership changes in Ministries relevant to CGIAR's work.

The Vietnam Government is likely to endorse and/or support CGIAR programs, including proposals for project/activity funding, when there is clear alignment with the priority national agenda. A specific example cited by government stakeholders is the renewed emphasis for investing in the development of the northern regions of the country, where poverty rates are higher and ethnic populations predominate.

Besides partnering with government, there is a significant community of international donors which have expressed interest – through their country/regional missions -- in supporting CRP Phase 2 in Vietnam. This represents opportunities for the CGIAR to mobilize additional and larger level of (bilateral) funding.

However to achieve greater scale of implementation and achieving outcomes, the Centers and CRPs agreed to work together for developing a few target larger-scale project proposals, instead of multiple smaller proposals competing for the same potential funding. Thus, a key action is to regularly organize theme-based workshops for joint development of research concepts and grant-writing.

12. Summative Notes

The entire process of stakeholders' consultation and action planning was in itself a valuable exercise in forging more effective dialogue and stronger partnerships with in-country stakeholders. Participants' feedback revealed that they appreciate the effort by the CGIAR to reach out to local partners and other stakeholders in shaping the agenda of CRPS in Phase 2.

Among CGIAR colleagues, the exercise reinforced the existing, though largely informal, working relationships across Centers and CRPs. It also nurtured a sense of oneness as "CGIAR" beyond the usual manner of identifying only with their respective institutions and programs.

Finally, the entire community of CGIAR Centers, CRPs and stakeholders reaffirm the potential overall value of investing in country collaboration and site integration efforts. But at the same time, the CGIAR need to provide guidelines that set creative space for customizing the action plan to the unique contexts and drivers, needs and opportunities, and institutional and partnership dynamics of each country.